



THIRTIETH Day Johnson Galt took one of Simon College's top brass through its paces this week in preparation for (left of) annual Canadian Stage Band

Festival at Simon College tonight. A stage band, as bandleader Woody Herman recently pointed out, is nothing more "than a big band located in a school."

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# The college band boom goes on

By PETER GOODMAN  
Star Staff Writer

Bob McConnell was flustered. The usually unflappable leader of that shiny big band, Ross Brown, had to come looking down from the stage during the group's show last Monday night at the Cornell that he was overbooked with the smattering of light of another big band sticking back up at him.

It was one of Number College's five regular stage bands, but what bothered McConnell was the realization that he was about to add his own second professional group to play composed for Collier's Number Nine, a place the college band could probably play better.

## Polished band

"I know how Number guys have been practicing like the pros," McConnell said usually. "So just remember my band started learning it only a day ago."

McConnell's report for the college group is unimpeachable. The trumpet, polished and in use of two from Number College that will compete in the finals of the third annual Canadian Stage Band Festival at Simon College tonight.

With bands coming from as far as Edmonton, Alta., and Trent, Ont., the festival is a reflection of the phenomenal interest in jazz-oriented stage bands. There are an estimated 40 active bands in high schools, colleges and universities across the country.

A stage band, as bandleader Woody Herman recently pointed out, is nothing more "than a big band located in a school. And these big bands are developing there because a lot of the teachers

are ex-musicians from the big band era."

Number College's top two bands, for instance, are led by composer Don Johnson, who also leads the Black and Ladder club's jazz band, and Ben Collier, the composer-manager who has written extensively for the late Duke Ellington's band.

But it isn't all outside for the big band era. There's behind the scenes in stage bands. According to singer Bob Herman, in town last Saturday with the Jimmy Dorsey band, "notable is keeping the old big band in business."

And it's not the outside that the promoters of "big band music" at the International Center on Stage Band are looking on to attract crowds to hear the Ross Brown band, the Jimmy Dorsey band, and Monte Williams scheduled throughout the month.

"You're the little themselves who are creating interest in the new big bands and stage bands," said Don Johnson. "They want something new to see. When they think Number College's three-year music course, they want to become professional musicians."

Professionalism is the key to the rise in interest in big bands, stage bands and stage bands. Rock was—and is—another music. This is its greatest value. All in all, it's fresh, new, and completely uncharted. It depends less on tradition than on tradition. And the only way to keep the band tradition alive over time is based on knowing something of the world around him and something of himself.

Significantly, when such players started seeing themselves as professional musicians as well as professional musicians, they started borrowing concepts from jazz. This was in the mid and late 40s, when bands like

Good, Sweet and Sour, Chicago, and Chase used jazz and rock sections in a modified swing often called "jazz-rock."

"So for a person trying to become a professional musician rock can be very helpful," said Dave Brubeck, a 30-year-old jazz musician going into his third year at Number College. "It's a musician's natural form. Instead, it destroys your technique, while a stage band expands your technique."

Technique is the magic word for the young stage band players. Eddie Karpman, the 18-year-old trumpet player out of New Haven, once told him: "I wanted to maximize a single thing. I want to be able to play it as part of his duties with Ben Collier's band in Number College."

"And be asked that one so well," said Ben McConnell, "that some guys have let Collier's band even to not play it anymore."

## New tricks

So when an established big band like Maynard Ferguson's, or Jerry Byrd's, comes to town with its full complement of technical wizardry, the audience is filled with local stage band players discovering new tricks.

Notwithstanding, big bands leaders are aware of local students. "It's in the position now to help a whole lot of people," Stan Herman said recently. "To help them learn to a whole lot of technique in their music."

There will be giving a stage band seminar at the camp of York University from July 11 to 13. And he is one of the many big band players, such as trumpeter Clark Terry and trombonist Elton Green, who spend much of their year teaching, but even musicians who don't actively teach are aware of their influence.

"All the kids are beginning to dig big bands now," said Curt Kane.

Established educational institutions are becoming less suspicious of jazz and are encouraging stage bands. "After all, stage bands are only continuation of the wind band tradition in schools," said Bob Winner of York University's music department, which has several jazz groups but no stage band at the moment.

"It's the meeting of other popular culture with the wind band, mainly band tradition is an educational context."

According to Paul Minor, a music teacher at Windsor Central College in North York and one of the organizers behind tonight's Stage Band Festival: "The so-called legitimate musicians are coming around to see the need for stage bands. They are the stage band at a good educational institution."

Paul Minamoto, the former Toronto big band leader who currently leads the jazz ensemble of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, told his children: "We stage to try to get our musical experiences—experience and a jazz-oriented band can offer."

"A few years ago kids were looked like the rock pattern. They wouldn't see anything else. But now they realize there's something more. That's not everyone is going to be an overnight sensation, that you have to pay your dues as a musician," he said.

It's to overcome this sense of competition that the Stage Band Festival was set up. In the past few months several prominent competitors have been held across Canada, with a total of 38 stage bands competing. And the winners of tonight's finals will receive a total of \$1000 in prize money donated by McDonald's Restaurants of Canada.

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#### COULD BE A RECORD

There are 1,512 people sitting on each other's knees in this attempt to establish a record for a self-supporting circle yes-

terday. Students of **Westview Centennial** Secondary School were trying to top a mark of 1,410 set by a New Zealand

group. The circle was formed in the school's football field which is located in the Jane-Finch district of Metro Toronto

—Globe and Mail, Dennis Robinson